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inspirations in him as his own veriest self; yet he is not music, *in esse*, but only a human form qualified to receive *from the exhaustless fountain*, and manifest its glories outwardly. He is a spiritual form, fashioned to experience and reveal the glories of music without being *it*. So man, truly created or fashioned to the Divine purpose, is fitted to experience and reveal God in his human activities—fitted to feel and act divinely—and yet is not God. God is in the immeasurable Providence of all power of *being, knowing, and doing*. All the providences real to thought and outward experience have their sole root in eternal Being. They come into outward form and activity by the power of the Living Word or Wisdom from that Being; and finally into proper subjectivity—into human appreciation and use—through man, the creature, become divinely fashioned to God's ultimate designs—become consciously one with his Source, and one with all his surroundings.

Creatureship is a form of human consciousness. And this form is experienced by degrees. It is first indefinitely conscious in a common human nature—a nature that buries all human kind in communal indifference. It is next definitely or distinctly conscious in a special nature—a nature that differentiates or separates man from man, and *apparently* man from God. It is finally associately or unitarily conscious in a composite nature that reconciles and divinely orders all relations, both human and Divine. As to consciousness, the creature is naturally man in the first estate; he is spiritually man in the second; and divinely man in the third, this third embracing and reconciling all previous contrarities.

WILLIAM H. KIMBALL.

CONCORD, N. H.

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### MAGIC OR MIRACLE, WHICH?

It is the plausible claim of a recent French critic, that the breadth of the scepticism of a given period, certainly as applied to the scepticism within the Church itself, and especially in so far as that scepticism is both humble and reverent, is in itself an indication of the extent of the new additions which are about to be made to the faith of the Church, when that scepticism has been overcome, and the new questions have received a satisfactory, if only approximate, solution.

If I were, in a single word, to attempt to indicate that defect in the conceptions of God's relation to the universe which has been the real cause of most of the scepticism in regard to the supernatural which has accompanied them, and the true method by which they have been and are being overcome, I should say that it all culminates in this: the substitu-

tion in the place of Magic (which was a violation and defiance, not only of law and of reason, but of all other divine qualities, such as love of beauty) of such a conception of the divine relations to nature, and control over nature, as is harmonious with them all.

I fear that at least the popular conception of God, in his wonder-working in the world, has made of Him simply a great Magician, and the miracles mainly feats of magic; and I am equally convinced that the only safety on the part of the Church is in abandoning this whole ground—this whole class of impossible and unthinkable conceptions, which have come to cluster about the miracles, and to put in their place ideas which are consonant with all that we know, through science, of the nature of the universe, of the nature of man, and at one and the same time ideas far more consonant with the highest moral conceptions of the infinite character of God. I cannot indicate better the nature of the intent of what is here to be accomplished, than by saying that what has already been so largely accomplished in Christian thought, as applied to the first chapter of Genesis, must now be applied not only to the miracles of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, but to that whole field which is embraced by prayer, by conversion, and the facts of the spiritual life or of the dependence of the human soul upon the life of God. How vast is the revolution in popular thought here involved will best be realized for many of us by simply recalling what carries us back, not more than a single generation, to a time when the creation of a world was described as being as easy to God as the creating an atom, and in which the present earth, with all its marks and results of geological eras, and its natural history of millions of years, was conceived as a trick of legerdemain, to which even a period of a few hours or a few days was conceded, rather out of deference to what might be considered the exigencies of the historical narrative, but which might as readily have been compressed into a moment of time.

But, if thus created, then equally might it thus be destroyed, with a word, and so it was said that He who had called the innumerable worlds, filling the infinite spaces of the universe, forth from nothing, might in like manner thus dismiss them back to nothing again.

It is unquestionable that the changes which have been wrought in all our methods of thinking are immense; equally certain that they necessitate a new way of looking at such ultimate ideas as those of creation and of Providence—fields into which it can hardly be said that Christian thought or Christian philosophy has yet entered with any definite conceptions capable of being used in a system; but I think it is equally certain that Christian thinking, as a whole, has already been immeasurably uplifted in

character, dignity, and every attribute of the highest power. From this point of view, the presence of magical elements in Biblical records is so far from being a matter of surprise that their entire absence, on the other hand, would be in itself a miracle. To the opening eyes and imagination of the race, as of the child, there is no criterion of the difficult or the easy, of the possible or the impossible. It is this latest generalization of reason, guided by experience, that finds everywhere reason and law, love and beauty, where, to the primitive exercise of the faculties, all is fairy-land, or a realm of magic. What is thus the central idea of magic, if idea can be predicated of that whose essence is unreasonable? It is that anything of which the thought or the conception in the imagination is possible is also possible in reality. But, while the tendency toward the acceptance of the magical is thus universal to the human mind in the earlier stages of its development, it is the distinguishing characteristic of the Biblical records that this language, alone of all human documents, is not necessarily confined by the conceptions of the age in which it found its first utterance, but that thus far it has, for the most part, yielded a higher meaning to each stage of the intellectual development of the race, and, by a kind of natural or prophetic transfiguration, risen with it as an ever attendant, ever increasingly commensurate expression of its increasing knowledge.

Notably is this the case with the first chapter of Genesis, in which, with no greater accommodation of language than would be natural and almost inevitable in such a case, the narrative might very well be employed by a disciple of Tyndall or Huxley in describing to his own children the progress of these wonderful world events. It is possible that, as was believed by Swedenborg, this wonderful adaptation has been secured in the description of the Creation by a guiding and controlling inspiration which does not belong in a like degree to all of the subsequent history.

What most concerns us, however, is this: Do the gospels present us with accounts of magic which we must reject and the accompanying facts, or do they give us proper miracles, and therefore events, which are consonant with, as well as expressions of, the highest measure of benevolence and excellence or glory of God?

For here, we repeat again, is the real antagonism of thought, which has precipitated the conflict in the thought of the best minds of the present century. It is not at all the antagonism between miracle and law. This is capable of resolution, and greatly to the dignity and elevation of both of its terms. The real antagonism is between magic and miracle, or between childish and impossible conceptions of the universe, and things which are required both by the necessities of thought and by the infinite

perfections we are also compelled or led to attribute to the author of that universe.

To that naïve faith or ignorant apprehension, for which the annihilation of such a planet as ours, with all its contents of life, and calling it again into complete being and activity as it exists to-day, is as thinkable as the appearance or disappearance of an atom, the New Testament miracles may seem at first sight to wear also some of the features of the magical, and yet, with the single exception of the multiplication of the loaves or perhaps the finding of the piece of silver, there is not one of them which presents any necessary contradiction to our thought.

So again of another class or type of manifestations truly and rightly termed miraculous; in lifting again into functional activity human bodies, from which the warmth and glow of what we call vitality have to all human tests apparently forever fled, we have a fact which also, to outward human appearance, has in other connections and in other circumstances occurred hundreds of times, and the frequency of whose possible recurrence has often been made the object of precautioning care even of legislation. What becomes of the living soul while the body lies stark and cold and breathless; who can tell? How easy or how difficult the summons which is followed by its resumption of control over vital functions we cannot tell, but in either case, in that restoration there is no contradiction of any ascertained law, either of the mind or of science, which should prevent us from admitting, so far as credibly attested, the facts.

Now, last of all, in approaching the scene of the ascension, a third type of miraculous accounts, I do so at once with more diffidence and with more reverence as well; but if we can show that even this one transcendent fact of the planet may be so conceived of as to free it from any considerable part of the magical features which encumber it, as usually represented to our imagination, we shall have taken one step at least toward that reconciliation with the thought of our age, which is the indispensable condition of the restoration of religious and with it of spiritual faith.

The difficulties which will necessarily still remain will be great enough, and I confess too great, to compel intellectual acceptance at this one point, and the faith of the Christian will still be left to rest upon the personal acceptance by a penitent loving soul of a fact which it cannot understand, on authority which it dare not dispute.

But such as it is, that partial relief of our difficulties must be found, I think, in the conception that the body of our Lord, during the forty days which elapsed subsequent to the crucifixion, had already passed through some of the stages of that complete transformation, from the natural to the spiritual—from the terrestrial to the celestial—from the earthly to

the heavenly—which, in the faith of the Christian, is one day to be part of the experience of every redeemed soul.

According to this hypothesis, it is at least not the body of flesh and blood, as it appeared during the earthly life of our Lord, which now rose, overcoming the ordinary working of the law of gravitation with all the difficulties which its subsequent disappearance must involve.

But, while thus considering, even with this varying degree of satisfaction, these three, which I will call the major miracles, we may, I am sure, now proceed to claim joyfully all the rest as no longer obstacles in the way of the gospel first to be overcome, but as manifesting in their form and intellectual adaptation, as well as in their inmost ethical nature and significance, the most exalted features of the gospel which they all illustrate.

They are, indeed, glimpses and foretastes of a higher spiritual order of things, in which the soul is to rule the body, and in which, by a divine process of recuperation, the new life in Christ is itself to possess a creative power, by which its stains and rents and imperfections are even in this earthly life in a large measure to be removed. These once considered in their true light, and the great body of the miracles, with both an inner and an outer force, become parts of the very highest wisdom of Christianity.

H. LOOMIS.

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y., *February 13, 1883.*

R. W. E.

[SONNET READ AT THE FUNERAL OF R. W. EMERSON.]

His harp is silent : shall successors rise,  
 Touching with venturous hand the trembling string,  
 Kindle glad raptures, visions of surprise,  
 And wake to ecstasy each slumbering thing ?  
 Shall life and thought flash new in wondering eyes  
 As when the Seer transcendent, sweet and wise,  
 World-wide his native melodies did sing,  
 Flushed with fair hopes and ancient memories ?  
 Ah, no ! That matchless harp shall silent lie ;  
 None hath the vanished minstrel's wondrous skill  
 To touch that instrument with art and will :  
 With him winged Poesy doth droop and die ;—  
 While our dull age, left voiceless, must lament  
 The bard high Heaven had for its service sent.

A. BRONSON ALCOTT.

CONCORD, MASS, *April 27, 1882.*